

REMARKS

Claims 1-22 are now present in this application.

Claims 1 and 2 have been amended, and claim 23 has been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter contained therein. Reconsideration of the application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Objection to the Claims

Claim 23 stands objected to for an informality. In view of the foregoing amendments, it is respectfully submitted that this informality has been addressed. Reconsideration and withdrawal of any objection to the claims are respectfully requested.

Rejections under 35 USC 102(b) and 103

Claims 1, 4-6 and 8 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by PUAR, U.S. Patent 5,287,241. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 2 stands rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over PUAR in view of POPLEVINE et al., U.S. Patent 6,184,557. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 7 stands rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over PUAR in view of WATT, U.S. Patent 5,477,413. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Without conceding the appropriateness of the Examiner's rejections, it is noted that the limitations of objected-to but allowable claim 23 have been incorporated into independent claim 1. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1, as well as its dependent claims, should now be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the 35 USC 102(b) and 103 rejections are respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants gratefully acknowledge that the Examiner considers claims 3, 19 and 20 to contain allowable subject matter, and claims 9-23 to be allowed. In view of the foregoing amendments, it is respectfully submitted that all claims should now be in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

Favorable reconsideration and an early Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

In the event that any outstanding matters remain in this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at (703) 205-8000 in the Washington, D.C. area.

In the event the Examiner does not consider this application to be in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purposes of Appeal. This

Amendment should overcome the current grounds of rejection and therefore simplify the issues for Appeal. Nonetheless, it should be unnecessary to proceed to Appeal because the instant application should now be in condition for allowance.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By 
Joe McKinney Muncy #32,334

KM/asc
0941-0322P

P.O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000